When Slaves were Nobles: The Shamsî *Bandagân* in the Early Delhi Sultanate*

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I

The ubiquitous presence of military slaves has been a distinguishing feature of the armies and the political systems of the 'Abbâsid Caliphs and the succeeding Sultanates in Islamdom. In the middle ages, the Seljûqid *wazîr* Niẓâm al-Mulk Tûsî and the scholar Ibn Khaldûn had separately commented on the virtues of the system of 'recruiting' slaves to consolidate the political strength of a monarch. Ibn Khaldûn had astutely noticed that military slaves (*ghilmân/mamâlik/bandagân*; singular: *ghulâm/mamlûk/bandah*) were valuable subordinates because they were natally alienated and socially dead.[1] The process of enslavement had carried slaves far from their natal homes, and their non-existent legal and social status in their new environment increased their dependence upon their masters. In the early thirteenth century the chronicler Fakhr-i Mudabbir noted the value of such a deracinated military group to the ruler:

> the further [slaves] are taken from their hearth, their kin and their dwellings, *har chand az khanah wa aqribâ wa wilâyat-i khûd dûrtar uftad*, the more valued, precious and expensive they become, *qadr wa qîmat wa bahâ'î-yi u ziyadat gardad* . . . .[2]

Scholars familiar with the phenomenon of agrestic slavery in the southern United States, find the usage of slaves as military notables (*bandagân*) highly unusual in Islamdom. In particular, the commodification of the slave,

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[1] Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans., F. Rosenthal, ed., N.J. Dawood, Princeton: Bollingen series, Princeton University Press, 1974 reprint, pp. 103–5, 146–49; on the significance of natal alienation and social death in slavery, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982.
[2] Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Ta'rîkh-i Fakhr al-Dîn Mubârak Shâh*, ed., E.D. Ross, London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1927, p. 36.

where the *bandah* possessed no social status, contrasted sharply with his apparent political standing as a military commander. Yet, in an important sense, it was the shared characteristic of all slaves, as objects and commodities, socially dead and natally alienated, that lent them value as dependents engaged in military functions in the Delhi—and other—Sultanates. Not unlike the agrestic slaves in the southern United States, it was the absence of any social privilege that allowed the slave to be considered as a potentially useful subordinate. At least to the masters concerned, the menial status of the military slave in Islamdom 'qualified' the *bandah* for tasks of military command and governance, tasks that individuals of free status would have willingly performed but were often not trusted to perform. Unique to Islamdom, therefore, the tasks of slaves could extend to include the power 'to command and forbid' freemen.[3] In the ninth century A.D. the chronicler al-Ṭabarî recalled the 'Abbâsid Caliph al-Mahdî's (158–69/ 775–85) sentiments:

> The *mawalî* [freed slaves] deserve such a treatment, for only they combine in themselves the following qualities. When I sit in public audience, I may call a *mawlâ* and raise him and seat him by my side, so that his knee will rub my knee. As soon, however, as the audience is over, I may order him to groom my riding animal and he will be content with this and will not take offence. But if I demand the same thing from somebody else, he will say: 'I am the son of your supporter and intimate associate' or 'I am a veteran in your ['Abbâsid] cause [*da'wâ*]' . . . and I shall not be able to move him from his [obstinate] stand.[4]

I have studied elsewhere the consequences of this 'social inversion', where military slaves, at the behest of their master, often held command over freemen.[5] Here I am more interested in understanding the logic whereby from a general class of the socially unfree, some military slaves could be distinguished with more sensitive responsibilities and trusted with command over others. The study is located in the early thirteenth century during the reign of the Delhi Sultân Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish (607–33/1210–36), whose slaves had a large impact upon the political system of the Sultanate

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[3] Several scholars have attempted to conjecture the reasons why the phenomenon of military slavery came to be 'peculiar' to Islamdom. In particular see Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980; and Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981; see also, Maurice I. Finley, 'The spectrum of slavery: A peculiar institution?', *The Times Literary Supplement* 3, 877, 2 July 1976, pp. 819–21.

[4] Cited by David Ayalon, 'Preliminary remarks on the mamluk military institution in Islam', in V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp, eds., *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, London, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 49.

[5] See Sunil Kumar, The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate 588–685/1192–1286, Duke University, Department of History, Ph.D. dissertation, 1992, pp. 171–81.

for the better part of the century. I have introduced my analysis with a brief historiographical section to provide a clearer context for my arguments.

II

The little historiographical attention paid to the study of the *bandagân* seems to be in inverse proportion to their influential role in the politics of the Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century. In the light of this lacuna, the recent writings of Peter Jackson and Irfan Habib on the '*mamlûk* institution' and the 'ruling elite' of the thirteenth century are particularly welcome additions.[6] Although Peter Jackson's work appeared two years before Habib's, from the absence of any citation it appears that the latter was surprisingly unaware of Jackson's research.[7] That the two

[6] The article of Gavin Hambly, 'Who were the *chihilgânî*, the forty slaves of Sultan Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish of Delhi', *Iran*, 10, 1972, pp. 57–62, was an earlier attempt to study the Shamsî *bandagân*. The author also presented a useful summary of the historiography in the field which I have chosen not to repeat. Hambly's article ignored the monograph of S.B.P. Nigam, *Nobility under the Sultans of Delhi*, A.D. *1206–1398*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967, where, as Jackson noted, the *bandagân* only received a fleeting mention. Jackson's and Habib's writings are the most recently published full-scale treatments of military slaves in the Delhi Sultanate. Peter Jackson, 'The *mamlûk* institution in early Muslim India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1990, pp. 340–58; and Irfan Habib, 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class of the thirteenth century', in *Medieval India 1: Researches in the History of India, 1200–1750*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 1–21; amongst unpublished material see also Peter Jackson, The Mongols and India, 1221–1351, Cambridge University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1976; and Kumar, *op. cit.*

[7] This was unfortunate for Jackson's research would have saved Habib from making many mistakes, especially with regard to the identification of elites. For example, Habib argued that Qutlugh Khân was a freeman ('Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 11, and fn. 61), and went on to repeat Nigam's error (*op. cit.*, pp. 198–203) in confusing the slave with Qilij Khân, the son of the free notable 'Alâ' al-Dîn Jânî. Jackson correctly clarified the distinction between the two notables ('*Mamlûk* institution', p. 344, fn. 16) but failed to provide the references that had guided him to this conclusion. The confusion originated from the fact that Jûzjânî provided at least three variations of Qilij Khân's name (further compounded by scribal foibles, for example, Minhâj-i Sirâj Jûzjânî, *Tabaqât-i Nâṣirî*, 2 Vols., ed., Hayy Habibi, Kabul, Anjuman-i Ta'rikh-i Afghanistan, 1963–64, Vol. 1, p. 476, where Khalaj may stand either for Qilij or Qutlugh, and Jânî became Khânî). Despite the many versions of the name, Jûzjânî never altered the attendant *nisbah* of affiliation, clarifying that he was, in fact, always referring to the same individual. Thus the notable was either referred to as Qutlugh Khân *pisar* (son of) Malik Jânî (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 35), or Jalâl al-Dîn Mas'ûd Shâh Malik Jânî (*ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 495), or Qilij Khân Mas'ûd Jânî (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 77–78; here, after the first reference, Jûzjânî dropped the *nisbah*). By contrast all references in Jûzjânî to Qutlugh Khân, the slave, were devoid of a *nisbah* (but note the reference to Tâj al-Dîn *pisar* Qutlugh Khân Shamsî, the son of Qutlugh Khân, whose *nisbah*, Shamsî, indicates that he was a slave of Iltutmish. Diyâ'al-Dîn Barânî, *Ta'rikh-i Firûz Shâhî*, ed., S.A. Khan, Calcutta, Bibliotheca Indica, 1860–62, pp. 24, 83; ed., S.A. Rashid, Aligarh, Department of History, 1957, pp. 29, 98. Moreover, the confederates of the notables also differed. Amongst others, Qutlugh Khân was allied with 'Izz al-Dîn Kushlu Khân who was also his son-in-law (Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqat*, Vol. 2, p. 64) and Qilij Khân was allied with Tâj al-Dîn Arsalan Khân. At the time when Qutlugh

authors reached their conclusions independently is useful to us, however, since we can better follow the presuppositions with which both indepen- dently approached the question of military slavery in the early Delhi Sultanate. These early formulations also directed the type of questions that the authors ignored or posed to their sources.

Of the two authors Irfan Habib's work is less directly concerned with the *bandagân*. Although he recognized that they were an important part of the 'ruling class' of the early Delhi Sultanate, much of his argument was directed towards showing the importance of the 'free-born' notables in the political system of the thirteenth century.[8] In so far as the Shamsî *bandagân*, the military slaves of Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish, were concerned, Habib satisfied himself with a description of their actions in the politics of the thirteenth century Sultanate. His narration, however, was based on several assumptions concerning the internal organization of the Shamsî slaves and the structure of the Delhi Sultanate wherein they were deployed, and it was this second aspect which was more self-consciously articulated in his article. Although Jackson's work was directly concerned with the *bandagân* in the thirteenth century, and the author differed completely from Habib in assessing the value of the sources upon which he was dependent, the two authors shared a common vocabulary in describing the structure of the early Delhi Sultanate, the context where the *bandagân* need to be located.

Jackson provided many reasons to be dissatisfied with the sources avail- able to historians of the early Delhi Sultanate, and to overcome this disability he opted for a comparative analysis of the Shamsî *bandagân* with the Mamlûk Sultanate of Egypt (648–922–23/1250–1516–17). This was convenient because the *mamlûk* institution 'entered its heyday in the seventh/thirteenth century, with the military coup of 648/1250 in Cairo,' a time roughly contemporaneous with the Delhi Sultanate.[9] The attraction in following a comparative methodology, however, did not originate from the close proximity of the two Sultanates in time if not space; Jackson perceived the Egyptian *mamlûk* institution as a paradigm of military slavery against which the north Indian system could be measured. The comparative method served to highlight the point where the Delhi Sultanate institution was similar or differed from its model. Since it was the same institution, the paucity and unreliable nature of information concerning the north Indian

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Khân and 'Izz al-Dîn Kushlu Khân were rebelling in the area of Samana and Kaithal, prior to their march upon Delhi, Tâj al-Dîn Arsalan Khân and Qilij Khân were in the region of Awadh and Kara. It was after Qutlugh Khân and Kushlu Khân were driven off from Delhi (and sought sanctuary with the Mongols [on which see Jackson, Mongols and India, p. 97, fn. 171]), that Tâj al-Dîn and Qilij Khân were conciliated by Balban, the latter receiving Lakh- nauti as his command (Jûzjânî, *Tabaqât*, Vol. 1, pp. 492–95, Vol. 2, pp. 34–35, 39, 73–78).

[8] Habib's argument concerning the free-born notables coincided with Jackson's, an analysis that I do not share. See Kumar, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–16.

[9] Jackson, '*Mamlûk* institution', p. 341.

variant could be overcome by the data from Egypt. After all Sultanate chroniclers were chronically unreliable, therefore any explanation of what they were 'actually' trying to communicate had to originate from sources which did not share these problems.[10] But the exercise remained descriptive; a fleshing out of points of similarity, and highlighting of those areas where there were variations in the institution. Jackson's analysis left no space for the local north Indian milieu, or the process of Sultanate history which might have left its own mark on the 'institution' of military slavery.

When Jackson did hazard an explanation for a 'curious' practice regarding the *bandagân* in the Delhi Sultanate, there was always a sensible explanation available in the voluminous sources of Mamlûk Egypt. Thus the *chihilgânî* or the 'forty slaves' of Sulṭân Iltutmish defied explanation, until Jackson provided a possible solution by comparing them with the *amîr tablkhâna*, or commanders of forty horses in Mamlûk Egypt.[11] From a different perspective, Jackson's interest in the emergence of the *mawlâ-zâdagân* (sons of free slaves) in the reign of Sulṭân Ghiyâs al-Dîn Balban (664/1266–685/1286) only went so far as to note that their deployment remained departures from the 'model' *mamlûk* institution of Egypt.[12] In other than a study of details (especially concerning the prosopographical problems of identifying nomenclature and titulature—a valuable exercise in itself) Jackson's comparative method curtailed his analysis by limiting the questions that he posed to his Sultanate sources.

Working within the vocabulary of 'institution', Jackson's analysis was unable to study process and change within the cadre of Shamsî *bandagân*. This was particularly unfortunate since Jackson did point out that the Shamsî *bandagân* were not an undifferentiated monolithic mass, that hierarchy did distinguish slaves from each other. But the presence of this hierarchy was merely stated as a property of the 'institution', and no explanation or rationale was offered by the author for its presence.[13] As a result when 'fratricidal' conflict split the *bandagân* cadre after Iltutmish's death, and junior Shamsî slaves eventually rose to positions of political power, this was merely treated as a phenomenon peculiar to the 'institution' of military slavery in the Delhi Sultanate.[14] Change came about in 'the

[10] In support of his ideas Jackson cited the writings of Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960; and Jackson, '*Mamlûk* institution', p. 344, fn. 15; see also Peter Hardy, 'The *oratio recta* of Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*—Fact or fiction', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 20, 1957, pp. 315–21 and his 'The Muslim historians of the Delhi Sultanates: Is what they say really what they mean?' *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, 9, 1964, pp. 59–63.

[11] Jackson, '*Mamlûk* institution', pp. 345–46.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 353–54.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 347–48.

[14] Jackson noted that, 'the sense of solidarity among the Shamsîs—what the Egyptian Arabic sources term *khushdâshiyya*, the group feeling conventionally associated with the slaves of the same master—was remarkably absent . . .', *ibid.*, pp. 351–52.

institution' only when the 'Turkish slaves' were swept aside with the 'revolution' of 689/1290.[15]

It needs to be remembered, however, that the emergence to power of younger and junior Shamsî slaves in the post-Shamsî period was of great significance, because these new entrants into the political arena were also relatively unimpressed by the existing traditions of the Delhi Sultanate. Conflict and change in the composition of the Shamsî *bandagân* did not imply a mere mechanical exchange of one group of power brokers for another; it also empowered individuals who did not share the unitary vision of the Sultanate emanating from Delhi. Changes in the composition and status of slaves within the *bandagân* cadre (and the larger ruling elite) materially affected the structure of the Delhi Sultanate. Because of these changes, when Sulţâns like Ghiyâş al-Dîn Balban and 'Alâ' al-Dîn Khalajî (695/1296–715/1316) sought to reimpose the authority of Delhi, they were forced to intervene in areas and take political measures which took the Sultanate in directions very different from those envisaged by Iltutmish. Since the '*mamlûk* institution' was not a dynamic, evolving cadre of military slaves, Jackson could not study them as a historically changing phenomenon.

Jackson's work, however, was far from being unique in carrying a baggage of synchronous presuppositions. Although he does not use the term, for Habib it was the 'institution' of the *iqtâ'*, a transferable revenue assignment which was a determinant feature of the Delhi Sultanate political system.[16] The model for this 'institution' was provided in the *Siyâsat nâmah* of Nizâm al-Mûlk, whose normative statements were cited at length by Habib in an earlier work.[17] Together with the *iqtâ'*, Habib argued that the character of the 'ruling class' was the other distinguishing feature of the Sultanate, and he traced the changes which had occurred amongst the elites from the Shansabânid, to the Shamsîd, the post-Shamsîd, into the Khalajî period. For Habib, however, 'the substance of power and wealth was, of course, represented not by the titles but by the *iqtâ's* or revenue and military charges.'[18] Yet, the author left unclear how changes within the 'ruling class' affected the political system of the Sultanate; did they affect the nature of the *iqtâ'*, or in a variation of Foucault's argument, did the 'institution' have an autonomous life of its own? As a matter of fact, Habib

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 355.

[16] Ifran Habib, 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 1.

[17] Irfan Habib, '*Iqtâ's*: Distribution of revenue resources among the ruling class', in Irfan Habib and Tapan Raychaudhuri, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. 1: c. 1200–1750*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 68.

[18] Irfan Habib, 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 11. This idea was also shared by Peter Jackson who regarded the *iqtâ'* as one of two 'institutions' brought to north India from the Islamic world (the other being military slaves). Hierarchy within cadre of slaves was also made apparent by the grant of an *iqtâ'* which indicated 'prominence in the state apparatus . . . .' Jackson, '*Mamlûk* institution', pp. 340, 347.

did not clearly identify the agents of change, although the Delhi Sultans were frequently stated to be the 'makers of history'. He charted the history of the *iqtâ'* elsewhere:

> First of all, the Sultans from Iltutmish onwards enforced the practice of transferring *muqti's* . . . . Balban . . . in spite of discovering great abuses, did not seek to abolish the assignments . . . . Major changes occurred during the reign of 'Alâ'u'ddîn Khaljî . . . . Ghiyâsuddîn Tughluq had no radical changes to introduce in this system . . . . Under Muḥammad Tughluq we find a further extension of the control of the sultan's government . . . . Firûz Tughluq's policy was to assign away lands in *iqtâ's* . . . . Under the Lôdîs, the system remained essentially similar . . . .[19]

For Habib, the institution of the *iqtâ'* and the rulers remained the agents that enforced 'centralization', a measure which was from time to time resisted by the notables. The primacy of action, however, remained with the energetic Sulṭân, and in a variation of the well-worn theme, if an ambitious, capable monarch sought to impose his will upon his subordinates, he relied upon the *iqtâ'*. Why, even Mu'izz al-Dîn Ghûrî, after he had received the appanage of Ghazni from his brother, learnt about the authoritarian traditions of the Ghaznavid Sulṭâns, through osmosis as it were, and proceeded to assign *iqtâ's* to his military slaves in north India![20]

In this analysis, for considerable periods in Sultanate history, members of the 'ruling class', rather ironically, possessed no autonomy of independent action. Devoid of any historical agency they were 'transferred' from one appointment to another. That this was manifestly untrue is brought out by the example of 'Izz al-Dîn Ḥusain Kharmîl who was not 'transferred to Gurzawân in northern Afghanistan' from Sialkot, as Habib would have it, but was actually 'one of the Maliks of Gurzawân', who together with his retainers, chose to leave the service of Mu'izz al-Dîn and retire to his home district.[21] If this is a convenient reading of the source, Habib's own

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[19] Irfan Habib, '*Iqtâ's*', pp. 69–71, 73–74.

[20] Irfan Habib, 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', pp. 6–8. Since he published his article on the '*Iqtâ's*' in 1982, Habib's opinion on the evolving character of the revenue assignment has also changed. Earlier he had regarded the *iqtâ's* under the Shansabānids as 'autonomous principalities' (p. 69). By 1992 in the 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', he referred to them 'as the classic device for centralization in Islamic states', and implied that it was one of the institutions used to counter 'the Ghorian polity . . .based upon the clan and family system' (p. 6).

[21] For Irfan Habib's version see 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 5 and contrast with Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât*, Vol. 1, p. 402: '*az Mulûk-i Gurzawân bûd . . . . az khidmat-i Sultân* [Mu'izz al-Dîn] *birûn âmad batamâm lashkar wa hashm . . . ba-ṭaraf-i Gurzawân raft*, [he] was from the Maliks of Gurzawân . . . with all [his] soldiers and retinue [he] left the service of Sulṭân [Mu'izz al-Dîn] . . . [and] departed towards Gurzawân.'

narration of Bakhtiyâr Khalajî shows how free notables picked and chose the best possible career opportunities available. Bakhtiyâr Khalajî sought service in turn with Sipâhsâlâr Hizabr al-Dîn Hasan Aznab of Budaun, Malik Husâm al-Dîn Ughul-Beg of Awadh and eventually Qutb al-Dîn Ai-Beg.[22] Jûzjânî himself notes how his father possessed sufficient initiative to leave Lahore and return to Bamian without so much as informing and getting the permission of the Ghûrid Sultân, *bî'ijâzat-i Sultân Ghiyâth al-Dîn bahadrat-i Bâmiân raft.*[23]

All the examples that I have cited refer to 'free notables', the term 'free' carrying with it the implication of 'freedom' to choose areas of service. By default, if nothing else, one could argue that the unfree must have then lacked this social initiative, a conjecture apparently borne out by the history of deployment of the Mu'izzî and Shamsî *bandagân* during the reigns of their respective masters. With only one recorded exception, Iltutmish's military slaves abided by the trust reposed in them, a loyalty which was in marked contrast to their intransigence during the reigns of their master's successors. But the capacity for intervention in Sultanate politics was not gained overnight by the Shamsî *bandagân*. Already during their master's reign, senior military slaves possessed political power together with the ability to exercise it without constant supervision, especially in distant areas like Lakhnauti, Multan and Uchch. The key to understanding how the slaves could be deployed as useful subordinates, therefore, lies in the contrary virtues ingrained in their unfree status. On the one hand, they lacked the freedom to choose their own areas of service, but on the other, the mere act of deployment implied that the Sultân trusted them with considerable local initiative. Not all Shamsî *bandagân* possessed the Sultân's confidence, and as part of Jûzjânî's information, summarized in Table 1, suggests, many slaves were never trusted or given independent responsibilities. The different manner in which the Sultân treated his *bandagân* is noteworthy only if we recognize that Iltutmish himself perceived the capacity for autonomous decision making that military command offered to his subordinates, and thus his selective discrimination in 'honours' dispensed to the unfree. If we recognize that military notables also possessed the agency of action (potential or otherwise), then questions relating to the Sultân's choice of one slave over another get to be relevant. These queries do not arise in the writing of Habib and others since the despotic monarch or the institutions of the Sultanate are the only historical actors.

[22] Irfan Habib abbreviates much of this, but see 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', pp. 7–8, and Jûzjânî, *Tabaqât*, Vol. 1, pp. 422–24, 427. The details of the transfer of allegiance from Husâm al-Dîn Ughul-Beg to Qutb al-Dîn are unclear. Jûzjânî suggests that Bakhtiyâr Khalajî took the initiative to offer allegiance and plunder to Qutb al-Dîn. Yet the chronicler's effusive account of the reception and the honour given to the Khalajî commander leads one to suspect that it may well have been Qutb al-Dîn Ai-Beg that sought to recruit Bakhtiyâr Khalajî. See in particular the account in *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 423.

[23] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 389.

Neither Habib nor Jackson is entirely novel in presuming the overpowering presence of the despot and the state in pre-Mughal India. Scholars such as Nizami and Ashraf, writing on the religious and social history of the Delhi Sultanate worked with similar presuppositions.[24] All of these scholars, for example, used the term 'noble' to refer to the assorted groups that comprised the 'ruling class'. The manner in which these scholars understood the term 'noble' was clarified by Athar Ali, who suggested that the term should be removed of its European feudal connotations, and be taken to mean the officers of the king, a superior class in the political order.[25] As he admitted, this had been the conventional translation of the term *Umarâ'* in the past, and he perpetuated the tradition which has continued unchanged to the present. From Habib's and Jackson's usage, those individuals who were politically enfranchised by the Sulṭân and given *iqtâ's*, were identified as 'nobles'. In Habib's logic it followed that when new groups of people were recruited by the Sulṭân, there was a conflict between 'old' and 'new' nobles'; thus, some of the Khalaj, primordial residents of Afghanistan, and some Ghûrians were the original Mu'izzî 'nobles', and it was '*natural* that the sudden rise of the Turkish slaves (in the Ghaznavid appanage) should draw the hostility of the old Ghôrian and Khal[a]j nobles'[26] (emphasis

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[24] K.A. Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, Delhi, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1974 reprint, p. 24; Kanwar Muhammad Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988 reprint, p. 84.

[25] Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, New Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1970 reprint, p. 2.

[26] Irfan Habib, 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 8. Habib has an interesting theory on the Khalaj. On the basis of fifteenth century *Sati* inscriptions in Devanagari where the Khalajî of Malwa are referred to as Khilchî and Khalchî, Habib suggested that Khalich might be the correct reading of Khalaj. He substantiated his argument by citing the seventeenth century chronicle of Lâhorî, *Pâdshâhnâma*, in which one of the areas near Bust, where the Khalaj had resided in the past was recorded as Khalich. Habib, therefore, argued for an Afghan origin, and an indigenous reading of Khilchî/Khalch rather than Khalaj/Khalajî, where 'ch' came to be [mis-]read as 'j' by the Persian chroniclers. Habib's argument could have been considered seriously if the recorded divergences in orthography were contemporaneous with the thirteenth century. The unacceptable implication of the author's argument is that every chronicler writing in Persian in the thirteenth, and the next four centuries, quite remarkably made the same mistake in consistently writing 'j' for 'ch' in Khalajî. It is also not true that 'in the thirteenth century no one spoke of them as Turks' (*ibid.*, p. 3) since a passage from Muhammad b. Najib Bakrân's *Jihânnâma*, written circa 1200–1220, clearly recognized their Turkish background (cited in the anonymous, *Ḥudûd al-'âlam: The Regions of the World, A Persian Geography*, trans. and explained by V. Minorsky, London, Luzac and Co., E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, new series, Vol. 11, 1937, p. 348). Moreover at the turn of the thirteenth century the Il Khânid *wazîr* of Ghazan Khân, Rashîd al-Dîn Faḍl Allâh, counted the Khalaj amongst the twenty-four Oghûz Turkish tribes (see Rashîd al-Dîn Faḍl Allâh, *Jâmi 'al-Tawârikh*, trans. K. Jahn, *Die Geschichte der Oguzen des Rasid ad-Dîn*, Vienna, Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philogische-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften 100, 1969). The fact that these later sources refer to the Khalaj as Oghûz Turks is not proof in itself of their antecedents, and as Bosworth and others have argued the Khalaj were probably early migrants into the Trans-Oxania, Khurasan and Afghanistan regions, perhaps a part of the

Table 1
Shamsî Bandagân in Iltutmish's Reign (Jûzjânî, Tabaqât-i Nâsirî, ed. Habîbî)

Number in Text	Reference in Tabaqât-i Nâsirî	Name of Shamsî Slave/ Ethnic Background	Purchased from	Deployment of Notable in Iltutmish's Service > indicates changes in the slave's career
1	II: 3–5	Malik Tâj al-Dîn Sanjar Kazlak Khân ?; probably of Turkish origin	Khwaja 'Alî Bâstâdî	Bought in Ai-Beg's reign > grew up with Nâsir al-Dîn châsingîr > Amîr-i âkhur > 625/1228 wilâyat of Wanjrut in Multan > iqtâ' of Kuhram > mahrusa-yi, garrison town, of Tabarhind > fort, town & suburbs of Uchch > d. 629/1231–32
2	II: 5–7	Kabîr Khân Ayâz al-Mu'izzî Rûmî; Turk from Anatolia	heirs of Nâsir al-Dîn Husain Amîr-i Shikar	Slave of Nâsir al-Dîn Husain Amîr-i Shikâr > sold to Iltutmish by Nâsir al-Dîn's heirs > 625/1227–28 town, fort, qasabat, market towns, & territory of Multan > ca. 1231 Palwal for his maintenance >
3	II: 7–8	Malik Nasîr al-Dîn Aitamar al-Bahâ'i ?; probably of Turkish origin	heirs of Bahâ' al-Dîn Tughril of Bayana	Slave of Bahâ' al-Dîn Tughril > sold to Iltutmish by Bahâ' al-Dîn's heirs > sar-i jandar > iqtâ' of Lahore > after 625/1227–28 wilâyat of Siwalik, Ajmer, Lawah(?), Kasli, Sanbharnamak & grant of elephant > killed during ghazw in Bundi region.
4	II: 8–9	Malik Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg-i Uchch of Turkish origin	Jamâl al-Dîn	Purchased by Iltutmish before his accession as Sultân > Sar-i Jandar > iqtâ' of Narnaul > Baran > Sunam > Uchch after Tâj al-Dîn Kazlak Khân's death in 629/1231–32 >
5	II: 9–10	Malik Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg Yughântat Khitai Turk	heirs of Ikhtiyâr al-Dîn Chust Qaba`	Amîr-i Majlis > by 625/1227–28 wilâyat of Sursuti/Sirsa as iqtâ' > Bihar > after 'Alâ' al-Dîn Jânî's removal: Lakhnauti and title of Yughantat > died in 631/1233–34
6	II: 10–13	Malik Nusrat al-Dîn Tâyisî al-Mu'izzî of Turkish origin	? a slave of Sultân Mu'izz al-Dîn	Slave of Mu'izz al-Dîn > ca. 625/1225–28 iqtâ' of Jind, Barwala > ca. 630/1233 Bayana, Sultankot & shahnagi of Gwalior > ghazw into Kalinjar >

No.	Ref.	Name		Career
7	II: 13–17	Malik 'Izz al-Dīn Tughān Khān Tughril Qarā Khiṭā'ī	?	Sāqī-yi khāṣṣ > sar-i dawātdār > chashnigīr > Amīr-i Akhur > in 630/1232 iqṭā' of Budaon > wilāyat of Bihar when Malik Yughantat received Lakhnauti > 631/1233–34 & Yughantat's death, became muqṭā' of Lakhnauti >
8	II: 17–18	Malik Tamar Khān A Qipchaq Turk	Asad al-Dīn Mankali	A member of the ghazw contingent against Rai Chandwāl > nā'ib-i amīr-i ākhur > after 630/1232 & Tughān Khān's appointment to Budaon became Amīr-i ākhur >
9	II: 18–19	Malik Hindū Khān Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Mubārak al-Khazīn 'Hindū'	Fakhr al-Dīn Isfāhānī	Purchased by Iltutmish before his accession as Sultān > Yuzbān > Mash'alah dār (while Iltutmish in Baran) > tashtdār (while Iltutmish in Budaon) > tashtdār + khazīnadār >
10	II: 19–20	Malik Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Qarāqush Khān Ai-Tegin Qarā Khiṭā'ī	?	An old slave of Iltutmish > Sāqī khāṣṣ > iqṭā' of Barihun(?) & Darnakwan(?) > shahna of khalisa of Tabarhind > after Malik Kabir Khān: iqṭā' of Multan & title Qarāqush >
11	II: 20–22	Malik Ikhtiyar al-Dīn Altūnia-i Tabarhind ? ethnic origin	?	sharābdārī > sar-i chatrdār >
12	II: 22–23	Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ai-Tegin Qarā Khiṭā'ī Turk	Amīr Ai-Beg Sanami	sar-i jāndār > iqṭā' of Mansurpur > Kujat & Nandanah >
13	II: 24–25	Malik Badr al-Dīn Sunqar al-Rūmī; Turk from Anatolia	?	Tashtdār > bahlahdār > shahna of the zarrādkhānah, the armoury, of Budaon > became nā'ib-i amīr-i ākhur 630/1232 >
14	II: 25–27	Malik Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar Qutuq Qipchaq Turk	Khwāja Jamāl al-Dīn Narīmān	sar-i jāndār > shahna-i ākhur >
15	II: 27–28	Malik Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar Kuret Khān Qipchaq Turk	?	shahna-i bahar wa kishtīhā >

Table 1 (Continued)

Number in Text	Reference in Tabaqāt-i Nāṣiri	Name of Shamsī Slave/ Ethnic Background	Purchased from	Deployment of Notable in Iltutmish's Service > indicates changes in the slave's career
16	II: 28	Malik [Ikit/Baṭ] Khān Saif al-Dīn Ai-Beg Khiṭā'ī Khiṭā'ī	?	jāndār >
17	II: 28–29	Malik Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar Tarkhān Karakhī Turk	?	? >
18	II: 30–33	Malik Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yuzbeg Tughril Khān Qipchaq Turk	?	nā'ib-i châshnigîr during Gwalior siege (ca. 629/1231–32) >
19	II: 33–35	Malik Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar Arsalân Khân al-Khwârâzmî ?; probably Khwârâzamî Turk.	Ikhtiyâr al-Mulk Abû Bakr Habshî	khasadar >
20	II: 36–40	Malik 'izz al-Dîn Kushlû Khân al-Sultânî Qipchaq Turk	from a merchant at Mandor	purchased at Mandor (ca. 623/1226) > sâqî > sharâbdâr at Gwalior (ca. 629/1231–32) > iqtâ' of Barhamun(?) > Baran >
21	II: 40–42	Malik Saif al-Dîn Arkalî Dâd Beg Qipchaq Turk	Khwâja Shams al-Dîn 'Ajamî Malik al-Tujjâr	?> sent as ambassador/courier (ba-muhimmât-i buzurg ba-iṭrâf-i mamâlik) >
22	II: 42–43	Malik Badr al-Dîn Nuṣrat Khân Sunqar Ṣûfî Rûmî; Turk from Anatolia	?	? >

23	II: 43–44	Malik Nuṣrat al-Dîn Shîr Khân Ilbarî (Yimak) Turk	?	? >
24	II: 45–47	Malik Keshli Khân Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg al-Sulṭânî Malik al-Hujjâb Ilbarî (Yimak) Turk	Ikhtiyâr al-Dîn Abû Bakr Habash	a slave in the dargâh-i khâṣṣ >
25	II: 47–89	Al-Khâqân al-Mu'aẓẓam al-Khân al-'Aẓam Bahâ' al-Haqq wa al-Dîn Ulugh Khân Balban al-Sulṭânî Ilbarî (Yimak) Turk	from Khwâja Jamâl al-Dîn Baṣrî	bought by Iltutmish in 630/1232–33 > khâsadâr >

Note: * The information presented in this table is taken from Vol. 2, pp. 1–89.

added). Since the term 'noble' refers to a politically superior class created by the arbitrary whim of the despotic Delhi Sulṭân, no further reflection concerning why specific groups of people were empowered was deemed necessary. As a result the history of the 'nobility' does not progress beyond a mechanical review of a conflict between political competitors, either 'old and new nobles' or the 'crown and nobility'.

By contrast, in the history of Europe in the middle ages, because the term noble carried with it the sense of an inherited status in the social order, a superior position which was protected by law, the history of nobility led to studies on the family, the development of monogamous marriages, inheritance and primogeniture, church and the legitimization of temporal authority, the emergence of knights and the ideal of chivalry, a

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Hepthalite confederacy. More relevant is the fact that in the period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries some chroniclers referred to them as Turks, others did not. Jûzjânî, for example, never identified Khalaj as Turks, but he was also as careful not to refer to them as 'Afghans'; they were always a category apart from the Turks, Tâjîks and Afghans. Yet, one of the ways the Delhi Sulṭâns of the Khalajî dynasty expressed status was through a Turkish titulature—for example, Ulugh, Alp, Yughrush, Qutlugh Tegin, Ikit. The confusion concerning the backgound of the Khalaj is perhaps best resolved by Mahmûd Kashghârî who did not include the Khalaj among the twenty-two Oghûz tribes, but listed them among the twenty-four Oghûz-Turkmân tribes, where Turkmân meant, 'like the Turks'. In other words, Kashghârî felt that the Khalaj did not belong to the original stock of the Turkish tribes, but had associated with them, and therefore, in language and dress often appeared 'like Turks'. Much of this information has been summarized by V. Minorsky, 'The Turkish dialect of the Khalaj', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies*, 10, 1940, pp. 426–34; and in his commentary on the *Ḥudûd al-'âlam*, pp. 347–48; but see also, R. Dankoff, 'Kashghari on the tribal and kinship organization of the Turks', *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 4, 1972, pp. 32–33; and other than C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran*, Beirut, Librairie du Liban, 1973, pp. 35–36, 210–18; see *idem*, 'Al-Xwarazmi on the Peoples of Central Asia', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1965, pp. 8–9; G. Doerfer, 'Khaladj' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, second edition, 1956, Vol. 4, pp. 917–18. It needs to be also noted in passing, that although Habib finds the apocryphal genealogical claims of the Khalajîs of Malwa from Qulij Khân, the son-in-law of Chingiz Khân, amusing ('Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 4, fn. 18), we should remember the significance that the title gurkhân/güregen, the 'royal son-in-law' had for the Mongols, and the emphasis that Timûr placed upon it as a principle legitimizing his right to authority (amongst others, see, Gerhard Doerfer, *Turkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963, Vol. 1, pp. 434–35, s.v. 'qûrîqân'; and Beatrice F. Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990 reprint, pp. 14–16, 57). The apocryphal genealogy of the Khalajîs of Malwa claiming descent from a 'royal son-in-law', should be seen instead as an ideological effort to claim greater status in north India especially after the removal of the Sayyid dynasty (855/1451) which had in its own time claimed a right to rule through its Timûrid connections. At least one of the Sayyid Sulṭâns, Khiḍr Khân (817–24/1414–21), had the khuṭba read in the name of Shâh Rûkh b. Timûr (for an English translation of the khuṭba see T.W. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, pp. 113–14; and V.V. Barthold, 'Xalif i Sultan', in *Sochineniya*, Moscow, Akademiia Nauk S.S.R., Institut Narodov Azii, 1966, Vol. 6, pp. 48–49).

study of the manor and serfdom.[27] In other words, the study of the nobility did not merely belong to the realm of political or administrative history. Since it was an integrated aspect of the social and cultural life of the period,, the nobility could also provide the entry into the study of a larger associated universe.

It is not my claim that the usage of the term 'noble' should make it possible for scholars of the middle ages to research in north Indian history the same set of questions that their colleagues in European history are engaged with. My argument is to the contrary: since the term 'noble' is borrowed with such a limited set of implications from European history, and since it sits so uneasily in the social milieu of pre-Mughal India, it should not just be used with far greater care, but that the term itself obscures rather than reveals the unique elements of medieval social and political life.[28] There is no doubt that during the Mughal period the

[27] Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society: Social Classes and Political Organisation*, trans, L.A. Manyon, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 283–344, summed up the scholarship of his generation. For useful overviews of current research on nobility in western Europe during the middle ages, see Lawrence Stone, 'Prosopography', in F. Gilbert and S. Graubard, eds., *Historical Studies Today*, New York, Norton, 1972, pp. 107–40; George Beech, 'Prosopography', in James M. Powell, ed., *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1976, pp. 151–84; Bernard S. Bachrach, 'Some observations on *The Medieval Nobility*: A review essay', *Medieval Prosopography*, 1, 1980, pp. 15–33. Three collections of essays provide an introduction to the major issues of interest in the field: Fredric L. Cheyette, ed., *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe: Selected Readings*, New York, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968; Timothy Reuter, ed. and trans., *The Medieval Nobility*, Amsterdam, Europe in the Middle Ages, Selected Studies, Vol. 14, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1978; and Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977. For nobility in Germany see in particular, Benjamin Arnold, *German Knighthood 1050-1300*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985; and John B. Freed, 'Nobles, ministerials, and knights in the Archdiocese of Salzburg', *Speculum*, 62, 1987, pp. 575–611; and *idem*, 'The formation of the Salzburg Ministerialage in the tenth and eleventh centuries: An example of upward social mobility in the early Middle Ages', *Viator, Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9, 1978, pp. 67–102. For France see Constance B. Bouchard, 'The origins of the French nobility: A reassessment', *The American Historical Review*, 86, 1981, pp. 501–32; *idem*, 'Consanguinity and noble marriages in the tenth and eleventh centuries', *Speculum*, 56, 1981, pp. 268–87; Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, trans. Howard B. Clarke, New York, Cornell University Press, 1974; *idem*, *The Age of the Cathedrals: Art and Society, 980–1420*, trans. E. Levieux and B. Thompson, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981; *idem*, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. A. Goldhammer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982 reprint; and *idem*, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. B. Bray, New York, Pantheon Books, 1983.

[28] Probably the most confused usage of 'noble' is to be found in the work of Nigam, *op. cit.* According to him the status of the 'nobility' was not determined by birth (pp. 2, 97) or feudal privileges (pp. 93–103), but the author does not find it necessary to explain why the individuals he was describing should be then referred to as 'nobles'. To add to the confusion Nigam goes on to say that the nobles also constituted one element of the 'bureaucratic' organization of the

mansabdârs were 'ennobled' by the *pâdishâh*, but we tend to assume that the political status derived through service with the state automatically provided the officer with a position in local society. On the other hand, if the term noble implies an inherited social and political status protected at least by customary law, then the 'noble' in Mughal India was not the *manṣabdâr* whose property could be escheated, but the *zamîndâr* chieftain whose rights were protected, amongst other things, by the *waṭan jâgîr*.[29] Despite his possible low ranking within the echelons of *manṣabdârs*, it is not unlikely that the *amîr* who was also an autochthon carried with him a potentially greater political and social clout. In other words, the understanding of Mughal *mansabdârs* as 'nobles' only provides us with an entry into an imperially prescribed system of ranks; it does not enlighten us in any way about the manner in which north Indian society understood and respected hierarchical distinctions in the Middle Ages.[30]

In the light of my particular historiographical concerns here, it is certainly a complete inversion of social hierarchy to refer to slaves as 'nobles'. As I

Sultanate (see pp. 106–10). K.A. Nizami, 'The early Turkish Sulṭâns of Delhi' in Muhammad Habib and K. A. Nizami, eds., *A Comprehensive History of India: The Delhi Sultanate*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1982 reprint, Vol. 5, pp. 224–26, goes further and refers to 'an all-India military-cum-administrative service manned entirely by foreigners . . . Turkish slave officers and *Tâzîk*'; for similar sentiments see also Muhammad Habib, 'Intoduction to Elliot and Dowson's History of India, Vol. 2', in K.A. Nizami, ed., *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1974, Vol. 1, pp. 103–10; Irfan Habib carries the same confusion in his 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class' when he refers to the manner in which 'nobles' were 'transferred'.

[29] On the *watan jâgîr* see Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–80. Note also Firdos Anwar, 'Implementation of escheat under Shah Jahan, some implications', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 52, 1992, pp. 266–73, where the author mentions in passing that 'in India nobility had no base in land and derived power mainly from its military contingents . . .' (p. 269).

[30] As scholars researching the medieval period, we should perhaps also worry about the disjunction between the social and the political in our historiography. Our current emphasis upon a study of the state and its 'nobility', which had only an exploitative relationship with the masses, allows for a facile reinterpretation of our data by communalists to suggest that the Mughals were, and remained, 'foreign conquerors' in 'India'. Coercive power was, however, only one element of Mughal governance, and other than *mansabdârs* many other social groups participated for different reasons in supporting the 'apparatus of the Mughal empire'. We know very little about these groups, their social backgrounds or their links with the institutions of the state. Useful early attempts were Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The middle classes in the Mughal empire', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 36, 1975, pp. 113–41; and Norman Ziegler, 'Some notes on Rajput loyalties during the Mughal period', in John F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1978, pp. 215–51. Some of the historiographical problems in using the term 'nobles' were also noticed by Frank Perlin who did not finally alter his own usage. Frank Perlin, 'Of white whale and countrymen in the eighteenth-century Maratha Deccan: Extended class relations, rights and the problem of rural autonomy under the old regime', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (henceforth *JPS*), 5, 1978, p. 224, fn. 19; see also his criticism of Irfan Habib in 'Concepts of order and comparison, with a diversion on counter ideologies and corporate institutions in late pre-colonial India', *JPS*, 12, 1985, pp. 111–15.

hope to point out in the remainder of the paper, however, military slaves were the favoured subordinates of Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish precisely because they were not 'nobles'.

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III

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The Mu'izzî and Shamsî *bandagân* must have been acquired in a variety of ways. It is likely that the majority of the slaves may have been captured in war during the campaigns of the Sulṭâns in the marches of Afghanistan and north India. But the contemporary sources of the early thirteenth century only provide us with information concerning a relatively small number of the Sulṭân's larger *bandagân* retinue. None of these were, curiously enough, seized as captives. Chroniclers such as Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Jûzjânî provide us information only about those slaves who were purchased, and it was some of these slaves who were later deployed in the more strategic commands within the Sultanate.[31] Some of these military slaves, like Tâj al-Dîn Ildûz, were purchased when they were extremely young, *khurd sâl bûd*. Others, like Quṭb al-Dîn Ai-Beg and Iltutmish himself, were acquired as youths.[32]

Their ages and method of acquisition notwithstanding, all *bandagân* went through a similar course of training before they were eventually raised up the ranks. The intention was to create new identities for the slaves where their dependence upon their master was absolute. To achieve this, the alienation of the slave from his natal surroundings and the related absence of social moorings in his new environment were crucial. In their stead, newly fostered ties and opportunities in the service of the monarch enticed the slave into an exotic world.

The Sulṭân sought to ensure that his dependents from alien cultural environments 'fit' into their new social and religious surroundings. As a result, together with the crucial training in arms and deployment with the

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[31] The richest source for information on the Mu'izzî and Shamsî slaves is Jûzjânî *Ṭabaqât.*, and Mudabbir, *Tarîkh*. In the twenty-second section of the *Ṭabaqât-i Nasiri*, Jûzjânî provides the biographies of twenty-five Shamsî slaves, some of whom were important in Iltutmish's reign, others who became influential in the years after their master's death. Here Jûzjânî also mentions the agents through whom Iltutmish purchased these slaves. (This information has been summarized together with the career of the *bandagân* in Table 1 of this paper.) Even where complete information is not provided concerning the nature of their acquisition, we can assume for the larger part that these slaves were also purchased because they were Turks. Since neither the Shansabânid Sultanate of Ghûr nor the Delhi Sultanate bordered Central Asia, these Turks must have also been brought to Ghazni and Delhi through intermediaries. For an account of the process of enslavement and subsequent sale, see the example of Iltutmish in Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât,*, Vol. 1, p. 441, and compare with an earlier example: the Ghaznavid Sulṭân Sebuktegin's personal account, in M. Nazim, 'The *Pand-Nâmah* of Subuktîgin', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1933, pp. 609–14, 621–23.

[32] On Ildûz, Ai-Beg and Iltutmish, see Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât.*, Vol. 1, pp. 411, 416 and 442, respectively.

army, it was important that the slave be instructed in the religion and etiquette of his new world. This religious instruction was introduced after the slave had been captured or purchased by the Sultan, and this was certainly true for those *bandagân* acquired as children. Otherwise, at least in the case of those slaves that were purchased as youths, this aspect of the training of the slave would have been carried out by the slave merchant or a previous master. A slave who possessed preliminary military and religious training commanded an excellent price in the slave market. Quṭb al-Dîn's value, for example, accrued from the religious training that he had received earlier from the noted Hanafî jurist the Qâḍi al-Quḍât Fakhr al-Din 'Abd al-'Azîz Kûfî.[33] This preliminary introduction to the Islamic world was of enormous value, for it implied that the slave possessed the rudimentary etiquette to be allowed into the imperial court where the Sultân could interact with his slave without any social discord.

A secondary effort was also directed to seduce the loyalty of the slaves by holding out promises of wealth and high office possible in the service of the monarch. It helped to draw the contrast between the lives of the slaves in their former environment while they were free and as slaves in the service of the Sultân. Fakhr-i Mudabbir presented the imperial case faithfully. Referring to Turkish slaves, the author noted that in the steppes the Turks were nondescript, indistinguishable from each other in power and wealth, but when they came within the Muslim world they became commanders and generals.[34]

The ideal distance between the steppe and the 'Islamic world' that Fakhr-i Mudabbir was hinting at was not merely spatial but also cultural. At least according to that author the ability to renounce heathen practice and natal roots were ethnic qualities peculiar·to the Turks. He noted that, 'when their hearts turn to Islam, *chunan dil Muslimânî banihand*, they do not remember their homes, their place of origins or their kinsmen, *khanah wa jâ'î wa aqribâ besh yâd nakunand*.'[35]

I am sure, however, that few slaves, Turks or non-Turks, were quite able to see the experience of enslavement as a chance to make good in new surroundings. Fakhr-i Mudabbir, writing for Quṭb al-Dîn Ai-Beg, a patron of Turkish, slave antecedents, definitely overstated his case; there were examples of discord in the imperial court from the Ghaznavid period caused by Turkish slaves who lacked sufficient decorum.[36] Yet, Fakhr-i Mudabbir was correct within a more limited context. The process of training was certainly aimed at creating a *bandah* who was familiar with some of the norms governing Muslim society, was loyal to his master and

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[33] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 416; and Mudabbir, *Ta'rîkh.*, pp. 21–22.

[34] Mudabbir, *Ta'rikh.*, p. 36.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Note the example of Asiḥtigin Ghâzi and Eryaruq for the Ghaznavids. See Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 57.

grateful for the avenues of promotion that opened up for him in imperial service, and there were notable successes. Of all the Sulṭân's slaves, some did learn the etiquette of their master quickly enough so that the monarch felt comfortable in their company. Here the purchased slaves had a definite advantage. Since they were a financial investment (in contrast to war booty) the merchants sought to improve their value in the slave markets by imparting them some training, and the Delhi Sulṭân certainly spent greater sums on their upbringing to ensure that his investments remained profitable.

The starting point to a position of trust and command for the *bandagân* was an opportunity to personally serve the monarch. During this period the slave would display his personal worth and ability to follow the instructions of his master. The master in turn would establish close personal ties with his subordinate and win his trust and affection through kindness and choice rewards. This was a period of nourishing or fostering a slave, and the Persian chronicles used the verbs *parwardan*, to foster, and *tarbiyat* (*kardan*), to educate or nourish, to indicate the process through which slaves came to be regarded, in time, as foster sons. Fakhr-i Mudabbir noted that after a period of close association, Mu'izz al-Dîn 'adored [Quṭb al-Dîn] as a beloved son, *farzandî'yi 'azîz girâmî*, [and] went to extremes in his rearing and education, *baparward wa dar tarbiyat-i u mubâlighat namûd.*'[37]

The establishment of close dyadic bonds between the slave and the master coincided with material rewards where the *bandah* was gradually raised up the ranks and eventually entrusted with greater responsibility. Ildûz, for example, was exalted, *buzurg gardânîd*, step by step, *pas martabeh*, until he was older, *chun buzurg shud*, when he received a command and governorship, *amârat wa wilâyat rasîd*. By 602/1206 he was the chief, *mihtar*, of the Turkish Maliks and the most distinguished of the slaves, *buzurgtar-i bandagân*, of Sulṭân Mu'izz al-Dîn.[38] Similarly, the slave Bahâ' al-Dîn Ṭughril was raised in status, *buzurg gardânîdah bûd*, after (appropriate) training, *batarbiyat*.[39] There is greater detail about Ai-Beg. After he had been distinguished from the commonlity of the slaves and made to serve in the Sulṭân's court, his was a faster rise in the ranks: from a leader of troops, *sar-i khayl*; to *Amîr* of the stables, *Amîr-i âkhûr*; to in-charge of the foragers on campaign, *bar sar-i . . . 'ulâfgî*; until finally he was given the military assignment, *iqṭâ'*, of Kuhram in the Punjab.[40]

The material advancement of Shamsî *bandagân* followed similar principles. The slave Malik Tâj al-Dîn Sanjar Kezlik Khân (number 1 in Table 1), for example, had been bought as a child and was brought up and nourished (*parwarish*) in the royal residence together with the eldest Prince

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[37] Mudabbir, *Ta'rîkh.*, p. 22
[38] Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât*, Vol. 1, p. 411.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 421.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 416–17.

Nâṣir al-Dîn Maḥmûd.[41] He was then appointed as the supervisor of the Sulṭân's kitchen (*châshnîgîr*), and was promoted thereafter to commander of the horses (*amîr-i âkhûr*).[42] In an identical fashion, the slave Malik 'Izz al-Dîn Tughân Khân Ṭughril (number 7 in Table 1) graduated from senior cup-bearer (*saqî'yi khâṣṣ*), to senior keeper of the royal writing case (*sar-i dawâtdâr*), to supervisor of the Sulṭân's kitchen (*châshnîgîr*), to commander of the horses (*amîr-i âkhûr*), until he finally received a military and administrative assignment, *iqṭâ'*.[43] The length of time spent in close association with the Sulṭân and the nature of his subsequent deployment were two fairly reliable indicators of the seniority of the *bandah* within Iltutmish's slave corps. Without doubt some of the senior Shamsî *bandagân* were individuals like Malik Tâj al-Dîn Sanjar Kazlak Khân; Malik Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg; Malik Hindû Khân Mu'ayyid al-Dîn Mubarak and Malik Ikhtiyâr al-Dîn Qarâqush (numbers 1, 4, 9 and 10 in Table 1). All of these had been bought and trained by Iltutmish before he became Sulṭân. Because of this early bonding and service it is also not surprising that when their master became Sulṭân they were trusted and deployed by him in some of the most crucial posts within his realm.

When Jûzjânî chronicled the reign of the Shansabânid Sulṭân Mu'izz al-Dîn Ghûrî, he referred to the small cadre of elite slaves as the Sulṭân's *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* (the senior, literally, the special slaves). Members of this group were deployed to perform a variety of sometimes overlapping sets of tasks: they were appointed as commanders of strategic military assignments, *iqṭâ's*; or used as military personnel and generals within the central contingent of the Sultanate forces, *qalb*; or were given important ritual positions in the court or household of the monarch, *sar-i jândâr, amîr-i âkhûr, khazînadâr*.[44] Through their period of training and close association with their master, the Sulṭân had ascertained the personal qualities of his slaves and the extent to which some of them would make reliable subordinates.

[41] '*Ba-u* [Malik Nâsir al-Dîn Mahmûd] *yek jâ dar hujr-i daulat parwarish yâft.*' *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 4.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] *Ibid*, p. 13

[44] Jackson, '*Mâmluk* institution', p. 347, argues for a three-tier hierarchy: those with *iqṭâ's*, those in the *qalb*, and the domestic pages in the court. Jackson's analysis once again followed his model of Mamluk Egypt. Following Ayalon's description of the *khâssakîya* (bodyguard, select retinue, pages), Jackson suggests that these were either members of the *qalb* or pages, but were slaves who had not yet been given military assignments. David Ayalon, 'Studies on the structure of the Mamluk Army', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 15, 1953, pp. 213–16. The Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century, however, was still not as structured as the one in Mamluk Egypt, and seniority within the Sulṭân's dispensation was not linked with administrative functions. This permitted the seeming anomaly where a Shamsî slave such as Hindû Khân (number 9 in Table 1), who never received an *iqṭâ'* in Iltutmish's reign, could nevertheless be regarded as a confidante and trusted slave of the Sulṭân (for full details, see following pages).

Thus, *bandagân* were given responsibilities, and with it the capacity to take independent decisions, only after the Sulțân was assured that the independent initiatives of the slaves would coincide with the interests of the master. The commodification of the slave, his alien status in local society, the process of bonding through *parwarish*, and *tarbiyat*, the rewards of increase in rank and responsibility gradually distinguished the *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* from the larger cadre of military slaves.

The method of training and gradual deployment of the Mu'izzî and Shamsî *bandagân* coincided at many points with the normative process described by the Seljûq *wazîr* Nizâm al-Mulk in his *Siyâsat nâmah*. The *wazîr* noted:

> This is the system which was still in force in the time of the Sâmânids (204/819–395/1005). Slaves were given gradual advancement in rank according to their length of service and general merit. Thus after a slave was bought, for one year he was commanded to serve on foot at a rider's stirrup . . . . When he had done one year's service with boots, the tent leader spoke to the chamberlain and he informed the king; then they gave him a small Turkish horse . . . . In his third year he was given a belt to gird on his waist. In the fourth year they gave him a quiver and bow case . . . . In his fifth year he got a better saddle and a bridle with stars on it . . . . In the sixth year he was made a cup-bearer or water-bearer . . . . In the seventh year he was a robe-bearer. In the eighth year they gave him a single apex, sixteen-peg tent and put three newly bought slaves in his troop . . . . Every year they improved his uniform and embellishments and increased his rank and responsibility until he became a troop-leader and so on until he became a chamberlain.[45]

Mu'izzi and Shamsî practice, however, was not nearly as structured as Nizâm al-Mulk might have wanted it to be; Mu'izzî slaves were frequently promoted much faster than the Seljûqid *wazîr's* recommendations. Quțb al-Dîn Ai-Beg, for one, jumped ranks in a year that the Seljûq *wazîr* would have stretched out at least over a decade.[46] Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish's 'system' differed even more dramatically, since not all of his Turk and other *bandagân* were recently enslaved. From Jûzjânî's biographies it is evident that at least three slaves had served previously in Afghanistan and north India and were sold to Iltutmish by the heirs of their masters. Kabîr Khân Ayâz al-Mu'izzî had been a slave of the Mu'izzî notable Nâṣîr al-Dîn

[45] Nizâm al-Mulk, *Siyâsat nâmah*, trans. Hubert Darke, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, pp. 103–4.

[46] In 587/1191, when he was the commander of the stables, *amîr-i âkhûr*, Quțb al-Dîn received the additional charge of leader of the foragers on the campaign into Khwarazm, and then the revenue assignment, *iqțâ'*, of Kuhram.

Husain Amîr-i Shikâr,[47] Malik Naṣîr al-Dîn Ai-Tamar al-Bahâ'i[48] had been a slave of the Mu'izzî *bandah* Bahâ' al-Dîn Ṭughril, and Malik Nuṣrat al-Dîn Tâ'yisî' al-Mu'izzî had apparently been a slave of Mu'izze al-Dîn himself, sold to Iltutmish under unclear circumstances.

Through these purchases, Iltutmish went against the traditional practice of buying slaves that were natally and socially uprooted. These three slaves had already established political and social ties with individuals in the area of their deployment, and because of their connections they were not as dependent upon their new master for privileges. Significantly enough, Malik Kabîr Khân Ayâz al-Mu'izzî provides the only example of a Shamsî *bandah-i khâṣṣ* who had his privileges reduced. In 625/1227–28 he was appointed as commander of the town and fort of Multan together with its surrounding territory and towns, *qasabat*. Multan was a plum appointment; the city straddled the major trade routes into Sindh, Afghanistan and eastern Iran, and it was also a strategic frontier outpost against Mongol incursions into the Delhi Sultanate. Circa 629/1231,[49] however, Malik Kabîr Khân was removed from Multan and given (the town of?) Palwal for his personal maintenance, *ba-wajh-i mâ'yaḥtâj ḥâl*. Kabîr Khân's loss of power and privileges would only be reversed in the reign of Rukn al-Dîn Firûz Shâh (633/1236–634/1236).

Clearly an 'imperfectly' recruited slave corps defeated the purposes for

[47] Malik Kabîr Khân Ayâz al-Mu'izzî's name is also included in the list of Iltutmish's notables as 'Izz al-Dîn Kabîr Khân without the al-Mu'izzî *nisbah*. Jûzjânî noted explicitly in Kabîr Khân's biography (*Ṭabaqât.*, Vol. 2, p. 5) that he was a slave of Naṣir al-Dîn. Traditionally, the slave, manumitted or otherwise, included in his own name the name of his master as the *nisbah* of affiliation or belonging. Thus Iltutmish did not hesitate to publicly proclaim himself *al-Quṭbî*. See from many examples the inscription of Iltutmish dated 608/1211: M.M. Shu'aib, 'Inscriptions from Palwal', *Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica*, 1911–12, p. 3. But then why did Malik Kabîr Khân the slave of Naṣir al-Dîn use the *nisbah* Mu'izzî? Jûzjânî may well have confused masters. To obscure matters further Jûzjânî does mention other Maliks with the *nisbah* of Nâsirî in his list of Shamsî notables: Malik al-Umarâ' Sunqar Nâsirî and Malik Bidar Kûlân—Muhammad Kulan Turk Nâsirî in a variant manuscript (*Ṭabaqât.*, Vol. 1, p. 450, fn. 6). We know nothing of their social backgrounds. If they had been slaves their *nisbah* of affiliation, Nâsirî, indicated that they had been closely associated to a patron with that name. This could have been Malik Nâsir al-Dîn Husain Amîr-i Shikâr, or even, possibly, Nâsir al-Dîn Qubâcha.

[48] The editor of Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât.*, Habibi, read the name as Ai-Tam? (AITM) Bahâ'î, and the Malik's name was also included in the list of Iltutmish's notables (Vol. 1, p. 451) as Malik Naṣir al-Dîn AITM Bahâ'î. In the list of Iltutmish's nobles Habibi also mentioned the alternate reading Ai-Tamar in a variant manuscript. I have preferred the Turkish reading Ai-Tamar. See *ibid.*, pp. 450–51 and fn. 6. In the list of Iltutmish's notables (*ibid.*, p. 451) another dependent of Bahâ' al-Dîn Ṭughril is also mentioned: Malik 'Izz al-Dîn Ṭughril Bahâ'î. It is possible that Jûzjânî did not know Malik 'Izz al-Dîn personally, or that the Malik was not important enough in Iltutmish's reign, or in that of his successors, to merit a separate biographical reference. Nevertheless, he must have carried enough prestige to be recognized in Iltutmish's list of notables.

[49] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 6, noted that his removal from Multan took place after two or four (lunar) years of his appointment.

which it had been raised, and Malik Kabîr Khân's insubordination was therefore quickly dealt with. However, rather than casting doubt upon the effectiveness of the *bandagân-i Shamsî*, the case of Malik Kabîr Khân enlarges upon the pressures upon Shams al-Dîn to not pay any particular attention to 'tradition' in the purchase of his *bandagân*. The urgency with which Iltutmish sought to recruit and deploy military personnel, especially just before and after his accession, might also explain the surprising presence of Malik Hindû Khân Mu'ayyid al-Dîn Mubarak al-Khâzin amongst the Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ*. Malik Hindû Khân, to my knowledge, was the first indigene to be advanced to the status of *bandah-i khâṣṣ* since Tilak, the slave of Sulṭân Mas'ûd Ghaznawî (421/1031–432/1041),[50] and would be followed subsequently by the slave Khusrau Khân Barwarî elevated by Mubarak Shâh Khalajî (716/1316–720/1320).[51] The circumstances influencing Hindû Khân's recruitment and promotion differed from the other examples of 'Hindu' slaves, as did his conduct which, unlike that of Khusrau Khân Barwarî, remained exemplarily loyal to his master.

It was the unique qualities of the *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* that were sought by Iltutmish to relieve the pressures of deploying reliable subordinates over newly conquered territories at some distance from Delhi. Uchch, for example, was conquered in 625/1228 and, when the royal forces withdrew, its charge was handed over to the Shamsî slave Malik Tâj al-Dîn Sanjar Kazlik Khân (number 1 in Table 1). Malik Tâj al-Dîn's governorship came

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[50] On Tilak see C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 101, 127–28. Irfan Habib notes that Hindû Khân may not necessarily be an indigene, but possibly a Turk since 'the name Hindû is also found amongst Turks, Hindû meaning black and so an alternative to the Turkish word *qarâ*, popular in Turkish names': 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 10, fn. 60. However, Hindû and *qarâ* were not synonyms for 'black/strong'. In Persian poetics and prosody, however, Hindû might be metaphorically used for black as Annemarie Schimmel pointed out several years ago. See Annemarie Schimmel, 'Turk and Hindu: A poetical image and its application to historical fact', in Speros Vryonis Jr., ed., *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, Fourth Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference, 1975, pp. 107–26. Nor am I sure how Habib read 'Mahûr' in Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât.*, Vol. 2, pp. 11, 44, 62; the printed text clearly spells it as MHR without any vowels. That MHR should be read as Mathûr or Mathûra does not automatically follow. In fact since Jûzjânî describes MHR as *qaṣaba*, a small town, it is possible that the town of Mathûra is not the one that the author was referring to.

[51] I have deliberately excluded from the category of Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* the example of the eunuch, *khwaja sara*, 'Imâd al-Dîn Raiḥân who was also of Hindu origin. Jûzjânî recognized 'Imâd al-Dîn Raiḥân's prominence in the politics of the Delhi Sultanate only in 650/1252 during the reign of Sulṭân Naṣîr al-Dîn Maḥmûd. There is no information, however, concerning his enslavement and early service. His importance in the early years of Nâsir al-Dîn's reign (644/1246–664/1266) suggests that he was purchased, like his rival Balban, sometime in the last years of Iltutmish's reign (died, 633/1236). As a result he would have been too young to have been a Shamsî *bandah-i khâṣṣ*. His rise to prominence, unlike Tilak or Khusrau Khân, was not a result of the favour and trust of the monarch. 'Imâd al-Dîn rose to power, much like Balban, through his own successful ability to utilize the opportunities for political manipulation present in the unstable years of Iltutmish's successors.

to an end with his death in 629/1231–32, upon which another slave, Malik Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg-i Uchch (number 4 in Table 1), was appointed as governor of the region. Malik Saif al-Dîn remained as governor of Uchch through the remaining portion of his master's reign.

The case of Multan was identical. After its conquest, its charge was handed over to the slave Malik Kabîr Khân Ayâz al-Mu'izzî (number 2 in Table 1). After he was removed in disgrace, circa 629/1231, the charge of Multan was handed over to the slave Malik Ikhtiyâr al-Dîn Qarâqush Khân Ai-Tegin (number 10 in Table 1) who continued as governor through the remainder of Iltutmish's reign. The strategic locale of both Uchch and Multan seemed to necessitate the appointment of trusted subordinates from the very outset. Three of the four amirs (numbers 1, 4 and 10) appointed to Multan and Uchch were old slaves of Iltutmish dating back to a period before he had succeeded in becoming Sulṭân. Not accidentally they were regarded as his seniormost slaves and therefore appointed to positions of trust from which—with the exception of Kabîr Khân—they were never removed during the lifetime of their master.

The close nexus between strategic commands and the deployment of senior slaves is also well brought out by the case of Lakhnauti. Here, unlike the case of Uchch and Multan, it was the free Amîr 'Alâ' al-Dîn Jânî who was appointed governor of Lakhnauti after the death of Prince Naṣîr al-Dîn Maḥmûd in 628/1230–31.[52] Subsequently, sometime in 629–30/ 1231–33, Malik 'Alâ' al-Dîn Jânî was dismissed, *ma'zul shud*,[53] and in his place the slave Malik Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg (number 5 in Table 1) was appointed. Unlike Malik Jânî, Malik Saif al-Dîn's governorship was a huge success, and the Sulṭân appreciated his remission of elephants to Delhi sufficiently to reward him with the title Yughântat. Saif al-Dîn established the tradition of a *bandah* as a governor of Lakhnauti for the remainder of Iltutmish's reign. After Saif al-Dîn's death in 631/1233–34, the governorship of the province passed into the hands of the slave Malik 'Izz al-Dîn Tughân Khân Tughril (number 7 in Table 1). In contrast to Habib's

[52] Jûzjânî, *Tabaqât.*, Vol. 1, pp. 438, 448, 453–54. There has been considerable confusion concerning Nâsir al-Dîn Mahmûd's death. Jûzjânî mentioned (Vol. 1, p. 447) that Nâsir al-Dîn died in 626/1229. Later in his chronicle (Vol. 1, p. 454) he mentioned that the prince died in Lakhnauti a (lunar) year and a half after (*b'ad az yek sâl o nîm*) the arrival of the Caliphal envoys in Delhi, 626/1229, which would imply his death sometime in 627–28/1230–31. The likelihood that 627–28/1230–31 is the correct date is incidentally corroborated by Jûzjânî who notes that Balka Khaljî rebelled in Lakhnauti immediately after the prince's death (Vol. 1, p. 448), and that Iltutmish campaigned against the rebel in 628/1230–31. At the termination of the expedition, Iltutmish appointed 'Alâ' al-Dîn Jânî as governor of Lakhnauti. Finally, the inscription on the entrance to the prince's mausoleum in Delhi, notes the date of construction as 629/1231–32, which would make it about a year and a half after Nâsir al-Dîn's death. See J. Horowitz, 'The inscriptions of Muhammad ibn Sam, Qutubuddin Aibeg and Iltutmish', *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*, 1911–12, p. 24; and S.A.A. Naqvi, 'Sulṭân Ghari, Delhi', *Ancient India*, 3, 1947, p. 5.

[53] Jûzjânî, *Tabaqât*, Vol. 2, pp. 9–10.

argument that the Shamsî *bandagân* were frequently 'transferred' from *iqtâʿ* to *iqtâʿ*, the facts would suggest that Iltutmish deliberately chose not to move some of his senior slaves from their assignments.

The Shamsî *bandagân* were the most favoured group in Iltutmish's dispensation precisely because, contrary to established historical opinion, they were not a Turkish 'bureaucracy'.[54] Rather than professional service regulations between an officer and the state, it was dyadic bonds created through careful fostering, *parwarish*, and education, *tarbiyat*, that influenced relationships between the master and the slave. 'Promotions', when they were given, were rewards for 'approved/agreeable service', *khidmat pasandida kardah bûd*,[55] and while there might be a range of 'approved actions', these were ultimately judged against the cultural expectations of a slave's selfless service in the cause of his master. For that matter, despite Niẓâm al-Mulk's advice, there were no time-bound 'promotions' within this cadre. Some slaves seemingly 'languished' with the same responsibilities for years; even when Malik Hindû Khân (number 9 in Table 1) was appointed *khazînadâr*, treasurer, he continued as *tashtdâr*, ewer-bearer, for the remaining years of Iltutmish's reign.[56] Jûzjânî presented this information as an evidence of the affection borne for the master by the slave and the honour given to the *bandah* who was allowed such close proximity and intimacy, *qurbat tamâm dâsht*, with the Sulṭân over an extended period of time. Malik Hindû Khân's career 'languished' only if we understand it from the anachronistic perspective of a bureaucratic system.

If Iltutmish's *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* were given some of the more honoured and strategic responsibilities within his patrimony, the junior slaves were not ignored. Their deployment seems to have been the occasion when they 'won their spurs' in positions of more limited responsibility such as *shaḥna* or superintendent. In contrast to the *muqṭaʿ*, the military commander of a region who possessed considerable independent initiative, the *shaḥna*, a superintendent, had a more precise responsibility. He was normally detailed for specific tasks under the direction of the Sulṭân, an officer through whom the Sulṭân maintained direct control over certain establishments or crucial functions of the government.[57] Before his appointment to the command of Multan and the receipt of the title Qarâqush, the previously

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[54] See the writings of Muhammad Habib (*op. cit.*), Khaliq Nizami (*Religion and Politics*; 'The early Turkish Sultans'), S.B.P. Nigam, *op. cit.*, and Irfan Habib ('Formation of the Sultanate ruling class'; '*Iqtâ's*').

[55] See for example, Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât*, Vol. 2, pp. 9, 10.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 19: '*ta âkhir-i ʿumr dast az tashtdârî na-dâsht*'.

[57] Although there is insufficient evidence to draw a parallel, there are certain features that are common between the areas where *shaḥnas* were used in the Seljuqid state and the early Delhi Sultanate. For the Seljuqids see Ann K.S. Lambton, 'Internal structure of the Seljuq Sultanate' in J.A. Boyle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 244–45. The office itself is of a Chinese origin (*shao-chien*) and was introduced into the central Islamic lands by the Qarâ Khitâ'î. See Doerfer, *Turkische und Mongolische Elemente*, Vol. 3, pp. 320–21, s.v. 'sihna'.

discussed Malik Ikhtiyâr al-Dîn (number 10 in Table 1) had been the *shahna* of the *khâlisa* in the vicinity of Tabarhind, the revenues of which were reserved for the Sultân. While the presence of unalienated *khâlisa* lands itself indicated an attempt by the Sultân to increase his revenue from taxation on the produce of land, in contrast to an income largely from plunder and tribute, it is significant that the administration of this land was under the command of a *shahna* who would eventually become one of the Sultân's *bandagân-i khâss*. Junior slaves were also appointed as *shahnas* to the armoury, *zarrâdkhânah*, of Budaon (number 13 in Table 1), of the river and the boats, *shahnah-i bahar wa kishtihâ* (number 15 in Table 1), of the imperial stable, *shahnah-i âkhur* (number 14 in Table 1). In other words, there does seem to be a correlation between the increase in the *bandah's* responsibilities and the bonding between the master and the slave; as the Sultân's confidence in his junior slaves increased, they were given greater responsibility and political initiative. The distinctions between the manner in which some slaves were treated over others, can be related to the different types of individualized relationships that they established with their master. From the larger cadre of the Shamsî *bandagân*, only some were regarded as the Sultân's special, honoured, *khâss*, slaves.

IV

The sense of a larger corps of military slaves within which there was an elite cadre privileged by the trust reposed by the Sultân was also recognized by the mid-fourteenth century historian Diyâ' al-Dîn Baranî. He noted that Sultân Ghiyâs al-Dîn Balban (664/1266–686/1287) was one of the Shamsî slaves, *bandah-i az bandagân-i Shamsî bûd*, who was manumitted together with the 'forty' Turkish slaves, *wa dar miyân-i bandagân-i tûrk-i chihilgânî azâd shuda.*[58] Manumission, of course, did not alter the juridical tie of dependence, *wala'*, or the emotional bond of association that tied the slave to his master.[59] Instead it was a reward given to only some (*bandagân-i tûrk-i chihilgânî*), from the larger body of slaves (*bandagân-i Shamsî* in return for faithful service. The *bandah-i khâss*, the future Sultân Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish, had been thus rewarded by Qutb al-Dîn Ai-Beg, and according to Baranî, Ghiyâs al-Dîn Balban, together with the other *chihilgânî*, belonged to a similar privileged category.

Gavin Hambly was the first scholar to understand the *chihilgânî* as a

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[58] Barani, *Ta'rîkh-i Firûz Shâhî.*, ed., Khan, p. 25; ed., Rashid, p. 30.

[59] For a valuable discussion of the ties between the freed slave and his patron see, Paul G. Forand, 'The relation of the slave and client to the master or patron in medieval Islam', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2, 1971, pp. 59–66; for the technical position of the freed slave in Islamic law see Joseph Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 161; and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, s.v. ' 'Abd' and 'Ghulâm'.

privileged cadre of slaves within the larger retinue of *bandagân-i Shamsî*.[60] Hambly argued that the *bandagân-i Shamsî* included in the twenty-second section of Jûzjânî's *Ṭabaqât-i Nâṣirî* were twenty-five of the forty members of the *chihilgânî*. He based this conclusion on the argument that since Jûzjânî chose to narrate their biographies they must have been important slaves of Iltutmish. Moreover, most of them shared the essential qualities attributed to the *chihilgâni* by Baranî: 'Turks, Shamsî slaves, holders of high offices and titles'.[61] He went on to add that since two of the *chihilgânî* identified by Baranî, Ghiyâṣ al-Dîn Balban and Shîr Khân Sunqur, also had their biographies in Jûzjânî, the *bandagân* in the *Ṭabaqât-i Nâṣirî* must be a part of the 'forty' elite slaves of Iltutmish.

In identifying Balban as a member of the *chihilgânî*, one part of Baranî's explanation implied that those Shamsî slaves (like Balban) who held high offices and titles in the reign of Sulṭân Nâṣir al-Dîn Maḥmûd (644/1246–664/1266) held lesser but still important positions in Iltutmish's reign. Hambly's argument relied on this element of Baranî's explanation. Jûzjânî's criteria in narrating the biographies of select Shamsî *bandagân*, however, differed completely from Hambly's claim. Jûzjânî had been very explicit that he chose to give biographies of only those slaves to whom he was personally beholden, and that these accounts should be seen as grateful offerings for dues, *adâ'i ḥuqûq*, owed by the author to his important benefactors.[62] As a result there is little reason to expect that Jûzjânî included in his chronicle only those slaves who had been important during Iltutmish's reign.

If we refer to Table 1 it becomes immediately apparent that of the twenty-five Shamsî slaves, eight (numbers 11, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, and 25) held no positions of privilege during Shams al-Dîn's rule. Ghiyâṣ al-Dîn Balban, around whom hung Baranî's tale of the 'forty' slaves, was purchased only in 630/1232–33, which was towards the very close of Iltutmish's reign (died, 633/1236). It is not likely that he was manumitted during the remaining three (lunar) years of Shams al-Dîn's life, for he was certainly not a senior slave. He was only a *khasadâr* (falconer) by the end of Iltutmish's rule, and received his first advancement only in Sulṭân Raḍiyya's service (634/1236–637/1240). Until that time he had still not been trusted with a military, administrative command. Nor could someone like Malik Ikit[63] Khân Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg Khitâ'î (number 16 in Table 1) have been a Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ*. He was a lowly bodyguard, *jândâr*, in Iltutmish's reign, and had only progressed to the post of chief bodyguard,

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[60] Hambly, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–62.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[62] Jûzjânî *Ṭabaqât.*, Vol. 2, pp. 2–3.

[63] Habibi read the title of the slave as Bat (BT?) Khân Saif al-Dîn Ai-Beg Khitaî, and noticed the presence of different readings in various manuscripts. In one of the variant manuscripts, this was written as AIKN, Ikin, and Jackson suggested the Turkish Ikit as a possible reading. I have followed Peter Jackson here. See Jûzjânî, *Ṭabaqât.*, Vol. 2, p. 28, and Vol. 1, p. 476 and fn. 11; and Jackson, The Mongols and India, p. 92, fn. 137.

sar-i jândâr, in 'Alâ' al-Dîn Mas'ûd's dispensation (639/1242–644/1246). For that matter Jûzjânî has no record of Shîr Khân's (number 23 in Table 1) deployment during Iltutmish's reign which was an astonishing omission if Shîr Khân was indeed an important slave commander in 633/1236. If the Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ/chihilgânî* held important commands because of Sulṭân Iltutmish's trust and patronage, then, at least all of the twenty-five slaves mentioned in Jûzjânî's biographical section, including Balban, were not the same as Baranî's 'forty'.

Although Muhammad Habib never seriously studied the question of the *chihilgânî*, in a brief aside in his 'Introduction to Elliot and Dowson' he explained that forty was merely 'a formal number', and the number of *chihilgânî* was probably far lower.[64] What Muhammad Habib was alluding to was the fact that within Biblical and Qur'anic contexts, 'forty' was a synonym for 'many' and should seldom be taken literally. There are innumerable examples of the usage of 'forty' in this context, and in a form much like the '*chihalgânî*', the *Book of Dede Korkut* referred to Dirse Khân's 'forty warriors'.[65] In both cases 'forty' should be understood as a metaphor for 'a large (unspecified) number' and Baranî's usage of the term *chihalgânî* is clearer when interpreted in this sense.[66] Baranî was accurate in defining the *chihalgânî* as an elite cadre within the *bandagân-i Shamsî*,

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[64] Muhammad Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 107; Muhammad Habib's arguments were misrepresented by Aziz Ahmad, 'The early Turkish nucleus in India', *Turcica, Revue d'etudes Turques*, 9, 1977, p. 102, fn. 19. Aziz Ahmad incorrectly cited Habib's estimate of the number of *chihilgânî* as more than one thousand. Recently Irfan Habib, 'Formation of the Sultanate ruling class', p. 16, endorsed his father's interpretation.

[65] *The Book of Dede Korkut*, trans. Geoffrey Lewis, New York, Penguin Books, 1982 reprint, p. 28 and fn. 3.

[66] There have been several interesting efforts to account for the 'forty' notables of Iltutmish. The most imaginative exercise is by Khurram Qadir, 'Amiran-i Chihalgan of northern India', *Journal of Central Asia*, 4, 1981, p. 97, who calculated that 'Iltutmish had four qadis, two wazirs, twenty-one amirs and ten offspring [sic. Iltutmish, in fact, had nine children]. If one were to include the three Mu'izzi contenders for the throne of Aram Shah, the list of individuals thus involved in the power struggle during Iltutmish's reign comes to forty.' Jackson's comments, 'The Mongols and India', p. 208, fn. 82; and '*Mamlûk* institution', pp. 345–46, however, are more interesting. He suggested that rather than 'forty slaves' the 'use of the distributive numeral [*gânî*] suggests . . . that each [slave] was [a] commander of a company of 40 *mamlûks*.' Jackson suggested further that the *Amir Ṭablkhâna* in Mamlûk Egypt who was a commander of forty horses might provide a parallel to the *chihilgânî* in India. But, if there had been a tradition of numerical commands within the early Delhi Sultanate army like the Egyptian Mamlûk Sultanate, it is inexplicable that Jûzjânî, who paid considerable attention to the careers of the *bandagân-i Shamsî*, made no reference to it whatsover. For that matter, it seems too far fetched to assume that Fakhr-i Mudabbir, Ḥasan Nizamî, and Amîr Khusrau would all ignore such a system of hierarchical commands until Baranî, writing more than a hundred years after Iltutmish's reign, mentioned it in passing. On the other hand, a near contemporary of Baranî, 'Iṣâmî (*Futûḥ al-Salâṭîn*, ed. A.S. Usha, Madras, University of Madras, 1948, p. 122) also mentioned 'forty turkish slaves' during the reign of Iltutmish. 'Iṣâmî did not use the distributive numeral with forty, he mentioned the slaves as '*chihil bandah-i tûrk*', and the context made it clear that the author implied not forty but an indeterminate number.

effectively a group of Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ*. These would be a group of slaves, trusted and commended for their actions, raised above others by Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish, and manumitted as a reward for their service. Baranî, however, was inaccurate in suggesting that Balban was a member of this group, and subsequent scholars mistaken in interpreting his usage of 'forty' too literally.

Ḍiyâ' al-Dîn Baranî used *chihilgânî* in two ways in his *Ta'rîkh*. The first was an explanation that within the larger body of Shamsî *bandagân* there was an elite cadre, senior in status to the other military slaves. Jûzjânî's evidence concerning the organization of the Shamsî *bandagân* has shown that Baranî was entirely correct on this point. Baranî seems to have been unsure of the exact number of these elite slaves in the reign of Iltutmish, and he therefore used 'forty' to signify an indeterminate but large number. Second, Baranî was also seeking to explain the process through which some of the *bandagân-i Shamsî* managed to prolong their stay in power by removing other competitors during the interregnum between Sulṭân Iltutmish and Balban (633/1236–644/1246).[67] Balban had excelled in the politics of manipulation characteristic of this period, and had come to effectively control power within the Sultanate from 647/1249. One way of explaining Balban's influential position in Nâṣir al-Dîn's reign was by suggesting that the Shamsî slave had always been an elite slave, who came to power as his peers, the senior (forty) Shamsî *bandagân* died. Thus, while Baranî was entirely accurate in understanding the hierarchical element within the Shamsî slave system and in identifying the *chihilgânî* as an elite cadre within the *bandagân-i Shamsî*, effectively a group of Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ*, he was inaccurate in suggesting that Balban was a member of this group.

V

The coincidence in our sources concerning the logic by which elite slaves were empowered to act as the agents of the Sulṭân is noteworthy. My emphasis upon the bonds which tied the slaves with their masters was partly in an effort to explain how the unfree could be given command over the free. The relationship of subordination, nourishment and loyalty which bonded masters and slaves together, allowed *bandagân* to play crucial, strategic and unsupervised roles within the Sultanate.

In an interesting development, however, when the Delhi Sulṭâns started deploying fewer military slaves from the fourteenth century onwards, their reliance upon larger numbers of free notables did not mean a concomitant redefinition of bonds which tied master to subordinate. Instead, in the discourse of the court, the paradigm of subordination rather ironically

[67] See Baranî, *Ta'rîkh i Firûz Shâhî* ed. S.A. Khan, p. 27, ed. Rashid, p. 32: 'and after the death of Sulṭân Shams al-Dîn Iltutmish his 'forty' Turkish slaves were successful, '*kamiyâb gashtand*' in their conflict with the free Amîrs.

continued to be the 'noble', selfless conduct and loyalty of the slave to his master. Thus, generations after the Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* were deployed as instruments of coercive political power, in the Tughluqid period the free-notable Mujîr Abû Rijâ declared that: 'I am a faithful slave, *bandah-i nêk-khwâh* of the king . . . I am like a slave, ready to serve, [for you] I will sacrifice all of my family and possessions, *khân u mân*.'[68]

This was not a minority opinion either; the great *mansabdârs* during the reign of Akbar and Jahângîr protested their loyalty, and proudly proclaimed themselves unfree as *bandagân-i dargâh*.[69]

In a political culture where a large number of the elite were slaves, or freemen who sought to appear as slaves, the term 'noble' is either a misnomer or in need of a dramatic redefinition. Certainly, in the thirteenth century, while the Shamsî *bandagân-i khâṣṣ* may have been useful in controlling newly conquered, dispersed territories, the governed did not necessarily appreciate the conduct of their governors. That the local commanders may have lacked the moral right to be regarded as the leaders, least of all the 'noble' element in local society, is suggested by this plea which was addressed to Ḥamîd, a freeman and a scribe who served a *bandah*:

Oh Ḥamîd! why are you standing before this man? . . . You are a learned man (*'ilmi*) and he is ignorant (*jahil*), you are a freeman (*ḥurrî*) and he is a slave (*bandah*), you are a pious man (*Ṣaliḥî*) and he is an uncultured sinner (*fasiq*).[70]

It remains to be noted that while Ḥamîd's conscience may have forced him to give up service under the Turk, similar compulsions were not evident in the case of Fakhr-i Mudabbir or Jûzjânî, both of whom continued to serve their slave masters. Nevertheless, in the plea addressed to Ḥamîd which was mentioned in the *malfûẓât* of Niẓâm al-Dîn Auliya, a source which is not a court chronicle, we have evidence of discordance, the ambiguity with which subjects sometimes judged the moral qualities of their leaders. By the parameters of the qualities possessed by a noble and noble conduct, to the observers of the day the Shamsî *bandagân* remained slaves. This should hardly be surprising; it was because of their distinct unfree status in the first place, that the *bandagân* had been deployed by Iltutmish.

[68] 'Iṣâmî, *Futûḥ al-Salâṭîn*, p. 398.

[69] See John F. Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', in J.F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Madison, University of Wisconsin, South Asia Center, 1978, pp. 252–85; and 'Norms of Comportment among Imperial Mughal Officers', in Barbara Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, pp. 255–89.

[70] Amîr Ḥasan Sijzî, *Fawâ'id al-Fu'âd*, ed. Khwaja Hasan Thani Nizami Dihlawi, Delhi, Urdu Academy, 1990, pp. 342–43. The Delhi edition of the *Fawâ'id al-Fu'âd* is an exact duplicate (including pagination and critical commentary) of M.L. Malik's edition published from Lahore (Lahore, Malik Siraj al-Din and Sons, 1966).